

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Ministry Of Higher Education

King Khalid University

King Khalid University Journal of Humanities



المملكة العربية السعودية

وزارة التعليم العالي

جامعة الملك خالد

مجلة جامعة الملك خالد للعلوم الإنسانية

حفظه الله

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Shakespeare's *Othello*: Misrepresentations of the Arab Moors

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الرقم: التاريخ: / / ١٤٥٦ الملفات: :

Shakespeare's *Othello*: Misrepresentations of the Arab Moors

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ABSTRACT

Many Elizabethan playwrights demoralized the sources that were outlying from reality. They intentionally or unintentionally dramatized misinforming descriptions of Arabs and Islam as an oriental religion, character, Moors, and Turks. Several Elizabethan dramatists portrayed them fallaciously as lascivious, avaricious, envious, cruel, murderers, usurpers, pleasure-seekers, converters, and lusty. The study is an attempt to illustrate the partiality of such dramatists in their plays with reference to Shakespeare's *Othello* as an instance.

The researcher utilizes the critical-analytical literary device as a technique of the study. The study starts with an introduction to the dramatist William Shakespeare, to be followed by a brief section on Orient and Occident, shedding light on the contribution and influence of Oriental civilization on the occident. The central part of the study, so to speak, is made to illustrate the dramatist's notions attacking the hero Othello, the Arab.

Keywords: contribution of Arabs, drama, falsifications orient and occident, Othello, partiality, Shakespeare

عطيل لشكسبير: إساءة تمثيل العرب

يحيى بن صالح حسن دحامي الحبabi

أستاذ مشارك

قسم اللغة الانجليزية بكلية العلوم والأداب - المندق

جامعة الباحة

المستخلص: كثير من مسرحيي العصر الإليزابيثي شوهو المصادر الأدبية التي كانت في منأى عن الحقيقة، فهو لا المسرحيين – بقصد أو بدون قصد – صوروا العرب بوصف مليء بالمعلومات الخاطئة وكذلك الإسلام كديانة شرقية ومثل ذلك الشخصيات المغربية والتركية، كثير من المسرحيين صوروا العرب بشكل منافي للحقيقة و مليء بالتشويهات مثل (فاسقين وجشعين وفاسدة ومحظوظين وشهوانيين) خلافاً للواقع. الدراسة عبارة عن محاولة لتوضيح الصورة الانحيازية لمثل أولئك الكتاب المسرحيين في مسرحياتهم في إشارة إلى مسرحية ‘عطيل’، للكاتب المسرحي الإنجليزي وليم شكسبير كمثال على ذلك.

يستخدم الباحث في دراسته منهجه التحليلي كوسيلة تنبية للدراسة حيث تبدأ الدراسة بمدمة عن الكاتب المسرحي شكسبير ثم تتبع بتفاصيل مختصرة مقارنة بين الشرق والغرب ملقياً الضوء على إسهامات وتأثير الحضارة الشرقية (العربية الإسلامية) على الغرب، بعد ذلك الانتقال إلى الجزء الرئيسي المتمثل في إظهار فكرة الكاتب المشوهة في هجومه على بطل المسرحية العربي ‘عطيل’.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإساءة والتشويه، إسهامات العرب، الشرق والغرب، شكسبير، عطيل، المسرح

INTRODUCTION

THE DRAMATIST

English drama attained its most ripened form during the Renaissance, principally the Elizabethan period. It was a segment that alleged to the dawn of leading playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, Robert Greene and the most prominent one William Shakespeare, and several others. The plays of Shakespeare capture the rhetorical with the familiar that signify the required construction showing ordinary life. He absolutely took advantage of changes and made use of actions.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is one of the significant figures in the English drama as well as poetry. He is appropriately believed to be one of the paramount pioneers in English drama. His plays are originated from a massive selection of literary genres and attitudes. For several critics and followers, Shakespeare is estimated as the father of English drama during the renaissance upward until now. He has a significant role in proving the influence and inspiration in his plays that oriental material and particularly Arabic, inspired him. “It is generally observed that Shakespeare's plays are not without glimpses of Oriental appearance” (Alshammari, 2013). Shakespeare designates Arabs with a particular orientation to their mysteries. He is not much concerned positively with the Arabic facts and realities, but what he depicted is from some classical or fictional writings in his poetic dramas.

Shakespeare deals with Arabic touches in many parts in his plays as in *Macbeth*, he designates the “perfumes of Arabia” (Shakespeare, 1998, p. 148), which indicates Shakespeare's familiarity with the Arab mode of life. A fantastic depiction of the Orient appears in the plays of Shakespeare's period, encompassing descriptions of its exquisiteness, morality, goodness, and congruence. Dramatists, authors, and their audience had a wish to perceive, see, and learn about the east fashion and costume, flora and fauna, cultures, prosperous cities, and civilization. Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and many others looked upon the East as a realm affluent in color, fruitfulness, scenery, and wealth.

However, some Elizabethan dramatists have treated Arabs with a sort of prejudice and falsification. As a result of the lack of their true understanding of the Arabs, such dramatists did not fully know about Arabs and their civilization; the result is not shocking to find Shakespeare depicting Arabs in some of his plays, especially *Othello*, mostly in terms of aggression and killing. Misleadingly, Shakespeare, in *Othello*, links Arabs with bellicosity and Turks with oppression. It might be

attributed to the history of common anti-Islamic as well as anti-Arabic thoughts in Europe. However, ‘Irving Wardle praised Hands’s decision to ‘restore [the hero] to Islam,’ thereby abandoning ‘the always defeated attempt to trace racial themes in this play, and root[ing] it much more profitably in a collision of culture’’ (Neill, 2006, p. 62).

Shakespeare portrays Arab Moors as lustful. One clear example is the hero in this story, *Othello* that stems from the same misinterpretation of the Arabic masculine carnality. Shakespeare probably went on the same approach representing a distorted image of Arabs and Muslims because of the lack of trustworthy information and because of the influence of some partiality of the medieval west. Shakespeare's incorrect observation about the woman's position in the Islamic realm is that a woman should be killed if she flatters or is flattered by a foreigner. The appearance of Arab moors in Shakespeare's plays is seen in Othello, the Prince of Morocco Aaron, and Launcelot's girlfriend, the Moorish. Othello is a hero of the army, but Shakespeare portrays his Arabic origin as barbaric. He, as an oriental character, is a foreigner in Europe. He shifts from a remote Arabic land to Europe and often endangers the safety of the main lady-character, Desdemona.

ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

European Renaissance initially had its part in Italy due to the Roman and canon law, as well as employing the translations, changing knowledge, and absorbing from Arab Muslims. They had the initiative process of studying Greek heritage. Andalusia and Italy were the first states to sip from the Arabic Islamic knowledge and erudition, which reached them from the neighboring Arabic countries in the north of Africa and the north-west of Asia. England is a remarkable country because it was the second to follow Andalusia and Italy in acquiring learning from the open doors of knowledge that reached Italy and Andalusia first. Many English scholars traveled to Italy to learn and study; then, they returned home with a good education. They played a principal part in confessing the Arabic Islamic civilization and the significant role Arabs contributed to the advancement of Europe in the medieval ages. Many witnesses denote that they acknowledged the positive influence of the Arabic-Islamic world. Andalusia was known for its philosophers, scholars, thinkers, and poets, with a culmination in its schools. It seized a prestigious location, which served as a linking dimension between the east and the west.

On the intellectual and cultural plane, the Crusades achieved but little. Only in Spain and Sicily did real good comes from the clash of faiths. The capture of Toledo in 1085 brought Western Christendom into contact with the abundant accumulation of Hellenic¹ -Arabic

learning; a school of translators was set up there, and Arabic treatises on science and philosophy, and Arabic versions of Greek thinkers like Aristotle were turned with Jewish help into Latin and circulated in the rising schools of the West (Saunders 1965, p 167).

Before the advent of Queen Elizabeth I with decades perhaps centuries, particularly before the fourteenth century, Europe was sunk under darkness, superstition, ignorance, and tyranny. Life was dominated by false notions, despotism, and moral oppression. In the meanwhile, appeared a commencement and an illumination that people named Renaissance, which means a rebirth of heritage and knowledge. However, such illumination has a reason to be built on and to realize how this emerging appeared. The critic Chandra in his book *The Literature of the English Renaissance* delivers the answer saying:

While Europe was under the ban of the Church as regards the study of ancient Greek philosophy and literature, a new religion had risen in Arabia in the seventh century...the Arab people were temperamentally inclined to philosophy and learning, and therefore, its mission was not only to conquer and annex the geographic world in the name of Islam, but the world of knowledge and learning and culture as well, and for four centuries while the European mind was deeply sunk in ignorance and sloth gave to the people of Islam the intellectual leadership of the world (Dahami, 2015).

Arab Muslims, approximately from the opening of the eighth century, created one of the bright, luminous, and magnificent chapters in the earliest times during unenlightened Europe. Islam enjoys a divine message of liberty for humanities, without any discrepancy of race or class. Muslims presented many recompenses to Englishmen who favored to adopt Islam. People of Britain were of distinct castes. Historically, seamen who were arrested by Muslims decided on embracing Islam after perceiving life in Muslim cultures and traditions and comparing that with the natural life of Britain. "In literature and science, they [Arab Muslims] were unrivaled. That on almost every subject which the human mind is accustomed to contemplate, they had more writers than any other nation in Europe" (Dunham, 1833, p. 283). All over the second half of the eighth until the beginning of the thirteenth century, the people of Arab-Muslims were the primary bearers of the torch of philosophy, knowledge, and moral values all over the world.

Islamic opening of Spain was not a military occurrence but an event of civilization. The Islamic progress, enlightenment, and advancement have merged and united with other contemporary ancient cultures, for instance, the Roman Kingdom and others that "resulted from this

interpenetration a new prosperous civilization called the Andalusian Civilization reached and affected the European mind as well as deeply affected the Spanish life" (Swielem, 2001, p. 121). Furthermore, the Middle Ages' exceptional phenomenon was the nonstop captivation in the West of eastern thought, brainwave, and literature. The Orient arrived at the West commercially and perhaps diplomatically through various methods, "through Byzantine rule in Italy, by relations with the German Empire, and by Saracenic occupation of Sicily and Spain. Our King Offa issued gold coins imitating an Arab Dinar of the year 774 with its inscription" (Crump, 1951, p. 62).

It is believed that the Moroccan States were unified as one harmonious world. It was distinguished to the east and west citizens as an Islamic country from Libya westward until Andalusia. These Arabic Islamic States continued during the medieval period to signify one civilization assorted in its influences with politics and trade, thinking, immigration, human relations, and social characteristics. It is said that, in the late years of Middle Ages and the dawn of renaissance, Toledo - a town in the middle of Spain on the Tagus river; important for steel and swords since the first century - was a city of multicultural town where Muslims, Jews, Christians, and non-religious people flourished under Arabic Islamic law.

Sicily fashioned with the Moroccan states in Andalusia and the north of Africa, there is an amalgamated culture of the unique imprint of the Arabic Islamic legacy where numerous transportation supports keeping it for long. Stating some ideas about Sicily, "It had been one of the wealthiest states in Europe in the twelfth century, and its rulers had controlled the central Mediterranean, or had at least bullied people into thinking that they did. The royal palace had played host to an exceptionally lively troubadour and scientific court culture" (Clifford, 2002, p 3). Sicily and Andalusia performed a pioneering task during the renaissance by modifying their inheritance and culture. Andalusians used to enjoy high alertness of artistic language and literature. Andalusians have experienced high awareness of learning. People of Andalusia put intellectuals in an immediate situation. "As the Arabs extended their power to all parts of Andalusia, numerous Christians fell into their hands, who largely constant to live under the protection of Arab Muslim[s]. Christians were well considered and regarded by the Arab authority. They enjoyed extensive religious liberty and often rose to high offices in the army or at court" (Dahami, 2019). People of Andalusia did not possess schools to support the process of learning; however, they are accustomed to using Masjids²As their schools for performing learning and acquiring knowledge, consequently, the illiteracy was rare as opposed to most European states that were recognized with literacy, which

"was wide except the high class of priests and monks who were able to read and write. Learning was not restricted to men only, but women also had a great portion in learning and contributing in the cultural movement" (Al Bajari, 2008, pp. 31-32).

The impact of Muslims on the renaissance is palpable, proved by undeniable witnesses. The Renaissance was the outcome of a series of literary events that followed one another, such as the reawakening of the earliest pieces of literature employing the translations of Greek writings by the Arab Muslims. "The *Rhetoric* of Aristotle was known to the middle ages only through a Latin translation by Hermanus Allemanus (c. 1256) of Alfarabi's commentary" (Clark, 1922, p. 66). Furthermore, during the medieval epoch, knowledge, and experience of Greek writings "had kept into religious communities. What had been lost in the Western Empire existed in the East. The continual advance of the Islamic Othman Realm on the territories of Constantinople drove westward to Italy" (Dahami, 2015).

Historians affirm that the procession of interaction elongates from groups of translators launched in Baghdad approximately before the ninth century from Greek history, literature, and edification into Arabic then again through a group of translators set up in Toledo during and after the twelfth century from Arabic into Latin. "Westerners seemed positively to prefer their Aristotle through the Arabic, rather than the Greek, tradition" (Baker, 1973, p 80). Besides, to the clarification of spiritual queries, the viewpoint of Aristotle had been applied, lacking translations of certain portions of which existed with the western teachers. It came into a sort of wide-ranging vogue and acquired a more significant assessment.

Some men of curious inquiry resorted to the Arabian schools, particularly those of Spain, in which, having learned the language, or at least understood in what esteem they held the writings of the Athenian sage, they brought back other translations, which were, it is said, less faithful than those already in their possession (Berington, 1883, p. 191).

Closer inspection divulges that it was not merely the case from a geographical approach, but beyond that, Muslim Arabs remained the inheritors of the Hellenistic culture in which the Hellenistic influences were not restricted to the realms that once owed loyalty to Rome. Nevertheless, extended far eastward into places that the Roman military never do well in reaching. "the Oriental Christian Churches had cherished the inheritance of Greek thought — philosophy, medicine, mathematics, physical science — and had diffused its stimulating influences through the

channels of those Oriental languages into which the works of Greek authors were translated, and thus it spread among the Arabic-speaking peoples" (Newton, 1949, p. 88).

ATTACK ON OTHELLO

Othello is a great tragedy of Shakespeare that has drawn excessive critical reactions down the centuries in which Othello's nature springs from his sentiments. Othello's quality excites his fancy, but it puzzles and dampens his intellect. It is a play of the Italian source that Shakespeare makes the tale more realistic. He updates the chronicle and inserts a fictional conceived variation on more topical history. He gives the anecdote of Othello, the Moor, a universal background, and recent associations. The beautiful white Desdemona loses her heart to the black Moorish Othello. Shakespeare deals with the characters consistent with their race. He envisions Othello as an entirely black male and has been named by Roderigo as

a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor³

Through conspiracy, the character Iago attempts his best to mar Othello's personality. "Iago does everything in his power to turn Othello into a disenfranchised 'stranger,' to alienate him not only from himself, but also from the military and domestic anchors that give him, and Venice, definition" (Bartels, 2007, p. 159). Using the character Iago as a mouthpiece, Shakespeare designates the Moor as a person of open nature; all the same, the Duke admires Othello as a warrior and a noble. Furthermore, "Shakespeare... takes pains to attribute meanness and vulgarity to Iago" (Heilman, p. 40). *Othello* is, to some extent, Orientalized in the personality of the hero Othello. Shakespeare plans to provide a character who is full of jealousy and suspicion. The playwright "has gone the wrong way to work, Shakespeare, we may believe, did not say to himself, 'I shall write a play on Jealousy,' and turn out Othello" (Allardyce, 1963, p. 211) but he did. There are several references to jealousy as a social tradition or convention in different contexts in several plays. Though *Othello* is a tragedy of a particular life, it embarrassingly brings out an enormous social controversy. Shakespeare makes the main character Oriental enough. The ridiculous notion of suspicion figures as a typical trait in the personality of Othello. "Unlike the shy Hamlet, whose serious fault is uncertainty, the protagonists of the tragedies that followed, *Othello* and *King Lear*, are united by blunders of judgment" (Dahami, 2017, 41).

According to Shakespeare's perspective, the Orientals deal with jealousy, unlike Europeans, as an admirable quality. The same manner could be public and communal in England. Othello's law is enormously significant in the drama to recognize his character. Critics in the west are much anxious

over such issues of the non-European vision of behavior. A critic will not doubt the main character was driven by his interior desire inspiring him to take retaliation. In the second monolog, though Othello gives the impression to be the most pitiful and weak-faced with the most excruciating psychological exertion, the human mind does not have the ability to think of passing through. Othello has a quick and commanding imagination, and he is a talented character. He is a person of action in which any work drives him for either prominence or cataclysm. He has been developed into perceptiveness that could penetrate the heart of the problem. His references to the Arabian tree, Aleppo, Islamic turban and circumcision outstandingly underscore his Islamic and Arabic connection. The process of circumcision is a sort of health process praising such acts and supported by the saying of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) when he said: "Five are among the acts of Faith: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, trimming the mustache, cutting the nails and plucking the underarm hair" (Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2003, p. 369). Such a saying or *Hadith* shows the greatness, importance, and significance of circumcision, which is prophesied more than fourteen centuries by Mohammad who has no previous knowledge of medicine except what prophesied by Allah.

Othello confronts the outbursts of his original emotional state and behavior. Shakespeare has depicted him as Christian belongs to Christianity and stands beside Christians against nations of the east represented by Islamic Turks. In another way, Shakespeare needs to make Othello acknowledged by European spectators but could not. "Shakespeare must have intended Othello to be a dark-skinned non-Negroid Muslim, a good deal more Arab than Ethiopian" (Shakespeare, 2005, p. xvii).

The Arabs weaving manufacture inspired Elizabethan playwrights. The most unique reference takes place in the play when the Moor talks about the handkerchief of silk, which was given to his mother from Egyptians. The description of Shakespeare of such antique and attractive skillful hand-made fabric is worth noting. Othello says:

That is a fault. That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give; (p. 108)

...

The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk;

And it was dyed in mummy which the skilful
Conserved of maidens' hearts (p. 108).

The French Orientalist Michon told that Islam that bid for Jihad or Holy war had much forbearance and open-mindedness with believers of other religions. According to the teachings of Prophet Mohammed, Khalifa Omar ibn Al Khattab did not harm Christians when he overpowered Jerusalem. Moreover, in his book *The Story of Civilization*, Durant, said that if thinkers valued greatness by the inspiration and power of the great people, then no doubt that they will opine that Mohammed is the most significant person of all in the history of humanity.

Shakespeare borrows an imaginary Turkish assault on Cyprus to fabricate the Moor hero, Othello. The historical verity in Shakespeare's thoughts was that a Turkish navy had taken Rhodes. The unique features of Elizabethan legendary notions on the Orient represent a substantial advance in the scope of attention and utility, which comprise additional information. Such features often reflect concern in the Arabs and east as an issue for inspiration and resourcefulness. Like his contemporaries, the poet-dramatist Shakespeare, who is believed to be the most famous of the dramatists England has ever brought, tends to repeat, to an extent, the typical western views about the Orient in his plays. He made profuse references to the eastern world and considered it on the margin. His delineation of the eastern characters, their traditions, gestures, attitudes, and psychological predilections are persuasively reinforced by the language they communicate.

Shakespeare utilizes linguistic tropes, actually, ascribe a color of artistic attraction, genuineness, and credibility. His adaptation of the Orient, though, like many of his antecedents cannot be interpreted as undeniably free of the tenacious prejudices, notwithstanding his numerous notes of gratitude for eastern scenery, eastern disposition, and peculiar Oriental developmental patterns. Shakespeare perhaps did not travel to the east at all, but his literary works show that the Oriental realms fascinated him. The east for him is the home of sunshine and a warm environment. Orient has an optimistic connotation of the sun awakening in majesty. His appreciation of the Oriental fabrics and silk is best realized in the play of *Othello*. The eastern weaving manufacture appealed to him largely. Othello is heard speaking of the handkerchief made of silk offered to his mother via a man of Egypt.

Shakespeare, in his plays and poems, refers to the eastern as Indians, Saracens, Arabs, Moors, and Turks. Such Orientals, according to Shakespeare's dishonest opinion, deceive Christians with the intention of achieving their malicious personal objectives that are associated with racial and

religious power. In *Othello*, Shakespeare illustrates two personalities, the first shows Othello as a gluttonous lascivious prince and the second as a Moor who commits the brutal act of assassinating his wife. Roderigo shares his thought against Othello stating:

Sir, I will answer any thing. But, I beseech you,
If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,
As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,
Transported, with no worse nor better guard
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor—(pp. 8-9)

Shakespeare depended on several primary historical, literary, and non-literary sources to improve the background and to provide him with sufficient details for the making of *Othello*. He, in constructing this play, altered a number of significant details learned from different sources and offered his matchless vision into human nature by creating jealousy the point of the flaw in the eastern Othello that Iago seeks to make use of in which Iago "persuades Othello to his j[e]alousy" (Vickers, 2005, p. 27). Iago has no honor or dignity as a human being; he utilizes all means of achieving his jealous goals. "Iago makes Cassio a part of his campaign to arouse Othello's jealousy of his wife" (Boyce, 1990, p. 62). In *Othello*, the dramatist focused on two opinions, which were more conspicuous. First, Shakespeare associated brilliantly both regarding Othello's fascinating past and the profound human sentiments that appear in the facade of the play. Second, Shakespeare situates far more stress on the race of Othello. There are references to race. Othello's blackness was a decisive point in the play and the entire realm that race is a decisive point that touches the flow of the play.

It can be said that Shakespeare learned from the historical document *The Generall Historie of the Turks*, which sheds light on the conflicts of Cyprus and Lepanto, where he implemented the battles as backdrops for the play *Othello*. In the historical document, readers have the ability to understand all about Arab Muslims, particularly black Moors and Turks. "Othello's narrative of capture, enslavement, and 'redemption thence' actually parallels the experience of many prisoners on both sides of a Muslim–Christian conflict that stretched back at least to the Crusades" (Neill, 2006, pp. 124-125).

The event of the tragedy *Othello* occurs in Venice and also in Cyprus. The estimated period is between 1489 and 1571. It is worth mentioning that Venice was the place for the two significant plays of Shakespeare dealing with religious and racial prejudices, *The Merchant of Venice* and

Othello. Venice was a vital commercial center for trading ships and a religious connector for pilgrims voyaging to the sacred oriental land.

The play *Othello* takes place in a geographical identification as a fragment of Venice and the hero is estimated as a stranger or outsider in the city but not as a Venetian. However, the black hero has assumed Venice as his own town and has married Desdemona, the white Venetian, but the Venetians did not consider him to belong to their culture whatsoever and he has not been counted a Venetian in the natives' eyes. Venetians look at Othello as a valuable and tough general who is much needed to fight against the Turks, but they did not consider him a civilized Venetian. Irrespective of the great need for him, the proud Venetians let him down. The Duke says:

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you
Against the general enemy Ottoman (p. 20).

Othello is forced to live just as a beneficial Moor for the help and benefit of the society, not as a Venetian. One can rationally trace out such stratagems ingeniously integrated into Shakespeare's partiality.

Shakespeare fashions an assessment of Venice with Cyprus that pervades the whole drama. There is an impact that geography affects the play crucially to comprehend why the design develops the way it does also highlight the alterations that the hero is going to go through. Shakespeare puts it the way that Cyprus is between the Ottomite's pagan cruelty and Venice's Christian good manners. Cyprus, in his vision, is a state of heathenism and quarrels. Shakespeare purposely makes Othello, commits vicious and fierce action such as slaying the lovely Desdemona not in Venice but Cyprus. The dramatist reflects two categories of dissimilarities: the first is racist and the second is religious, in which both have an emotional impact on the honor of the Venetian identity. Shakespeare presents the blending between Othello and Desdemona as unfit because the wife is European and the husband is an Arab in which such marriage threatens the contamination of the self. Similarly, the Turks create a threat to the identity of the self of the European subjectivity by their army growth, "the Turks threaten Venice's political and economic interests" (Pechter, 1999, p. 35) putting in mind that the Turks certainly do not appear on the stage, only discussed. Such two categories of dissimilarity - the racial and the religious - meet in the character of Othello in which both are applied to the dialogue on Orient. The play, as the playwright depicts, discusses a sort of danger of the self with the other, a particular menace of the dissolution of the self into the other deploying a discourse of religious-racial, which encompasses the identity of self and other-self.

The prejudice of some Elizabethan dramatists on black Islamic 'other' can easily be delineated in Othello's character. He, as an oriental and an Arab, has become the focus of condemnation by the Venetians. The hero appears as an odd intrude in Venetian culture, such a black appearance forming him somewhat different from a social being. Iago shows his hatred, abhorrence, and loathing against Othello all over the play. He maliciously tries to get Desdemona's father angry and irritated when he says:

'Zounds, sir, you're robb'd; for shame, put on
your gown;
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul;
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is topping your white ewe. Arise, arise;
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you:
Arise, I say (p. 6).

Othello is immorally portrayed by Iago with expressions such as 'old black ram' and 'devil' in an obvious hatred not only against Othello but also against all the Arab Moors.

In the eyes of European audiences, Othello's blackness is abnormality as well as being a symbol of an odd other. William Shakespeare displays Othello's dark skin as someone to make him susceptible to the wiles of racist white persons, for instance, Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio, whom their claim on considering him as only

An extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and everywhere (p. 9).

A critic or a reader of contemplation can notice the traditions the Oriental people are simply employed upon. The hero is deceived and his thoughts poisoned with conspiracies of Iago the cunning host who abhors the eastern people in general and the black race in particular. Iago says:

I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leapt into my seat, the thought whereof
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am evened with him (p. 51).

Iago frankly says about Othello, 'I hate the Moor.' All meet Othello's strangeness of color, weird behavior, and his faith with scorn and contempt; Iago declares:

Thou art sure of me:--go, make money:--I have told
thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I
hate the Moor: my cause is hearted; thine hath no
less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge
against him: if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost

thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse! go, provide thy money. We will have more of this to-morrow (p. 34).

The eyes of the Venetians see Othello as a criminal; he committed a crime because of the marriage with Desdemona the white European. "Iago is successful in his plot to make her appear adulterous, and Othello subjects her to insults and violence" (Dobson, 2001, p. 110). Iago, forwarding his aggressive speech expressing his abhorrence saying "Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans" (p. 6).

Iago appears to show the most abhorrence against Othello because he was once a Muslim as well as a black settler in Venice. Brabantio and Iago are the most significant opponents against the link of marriage between the black Othello and the white Desdemona. "To the dismay of many subsequent critics, Desdemona, like an impudent boy, engages in witty bawdy banter with Iago" (Wells, 2002, p. 9). They both insist on the abnormality of such marriage as part of their policy of segregation and isolation of Othello.

According to Shakespeare, the Ottomans jeopardize all the Christians. They strive to remove western sovereigns from power, take possession of European lands. As wrongly conceived in the play, the Ottomans seduce occidental western ladies and conquest Christian knights with the intention of removing obstacles to the expansion of the Islamic kingdom, through miscegenation with white ladies, to the development of the Turkish ethnicity.

In the second act, we realize that the critical dialogue in *Othello* is racially against blackness as well as Islam. It is the warning of Islam, which sends all of Othello, Desdemona, and Iago to Cyprus. The knight Othello is preoccupied with 'inner Islam' which, according to the dramatist, leads him to kill Desdemona.

Readers are able to see that Shakespeare desensitized Othello as an eastern fellow by allowing all of Iago, Brabantio, and Rodrigo to mistreat him. Their stated disapproval of the relation of Othello and Desdemona mirrors an overall vision of many Elizabethan cultured thinkers that black-white matrimony was hateful. In the end, the hero comes to comprehend that he cannot replace his nature and aggression; Othello finds himself convinced by his personal uncertainties and communications, he is wronged by the formerly held concepts of racial and religious dissimilarities; he ought to be penalized for being the other

And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl!

Even like thy chastity. O cursed slave!
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! Roast me in sulphur! (p. 187).

Historically, *Othello* exhibits a complex interaction and dealings between the west and the east. The play insists on the dissimilarity between the two identities, (self and the other). The procedure of the stereotyped is an essential approach on the side of the representative of prevailing philosophies who preserve influence and a sense of cultural sovereignty through the elimination of the other.

CONCLUSION

As an Oriental play, *Othello* is played out in the collision of races, in opposition to philosophies and beyond all in jealousy. Our dramatist had twisted the circumstances of Othello and Desdemona into a conundrum of miscegenation. Like several Elizabethan playwrights who composed plays about the Orient, Shakespeare states the prevailing anxiety of conversion to Islam. Shakespeare, in this play, deals with Christian – Muslim communication. He announces the phrase ‘to turn Turk’ to express a feeling of fear on the religious conversion to Islam.

The researcher conceives that Shakespeare's perspective is that Muslims endeavor to conquer occidental sovereigns, tempt western ladies, and consequently, they know how to spread their Islamic belief employing miscegenation with western white ladies. Because Shakespeare does not have any idea about the substance of Islam, the result is a wrong misunderstanding. It is evident that the meaningful dialogue in the play does not focus only on blackness but also Othello indirectly concentrates on Islam. As it is shown in this drama, it is the menace of Islam, which sends the main characters Othello, Desdemona, Iago, and several others to Cyprus.

Shakespeare categorized Othello as a voluptuous lust being, and Shakespeare has degraded Othello by allowing the prejudiced Europeans in the play to mistreat him. Via Iago, the dramatist focuses on the subject of jealousy as an attribute in the Orientals. It is debated with documented references that many Elizabethan dramatists such as William Shakespeare have intentionally or unintentionally extended and invigorated the misapprehension about the east and Oriental culture. Shakespeare in *Othello*, partially and immorally shows a deformed portrait telling the inferiority of the Orient and superiority of Christian West using Iago as his mouthpiece. Shakespeare's *Othello*, so to speak, in clear words, is a notable instance of the connotation of negative features concerning Orient and Islam. Shakespeare does not respect his main protagonist Othello, so he

depicts love connection and instigates through it to be misjudged in diverse conducts and via various actors.

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[loom%2C+HaroldHarold+Bloom&rft.au=Raffel%2C+Burton&rft.date=2005-01-01&rft.isbn=9780300108071&rft.externalDocID=R03643892¶mdict=en-US](#)

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¹ Hellenic is referred to the gorgeous Greek lady, Helen, who caused the great war between Sparta and Troy. Several poets praised her beauty in their works, such as Christopher Marlowe in his dramatic play *Dr. Faustus*.

² Places where Muslims perform their prayers worshiping Allah.

³ Shakespeare, W. 2018. Othello, Global Grey ebook. p. 9. [All references of the play *Othello* in this study are quoted from this source unless are included in a quotation from another source; the number of pages will be added.]